



PHOTOGRAPHY NEWS

■ CANON AIDE

Canon has launched a website aimed at educating the camera-buying public in the finer points of SLR photography. Although clearly an attempt to bolster its position as the number one consumer digital SLR camera manufacturer, the site is well structured and guides you gently through the main components of any SLR camera with only passing reference to Canon products.

It covers the mechanics and the photographic impact of aperture, shutter speed and CCD sensitivity and goes on to explain the ins and outs of exposure compensation, white balance and various auto-focus methods. If you have an SLR or are thinking of buying one, this is essential reading. Visit www.canon.co.jp/imaging/enjoydslr/index.html.

■ WIDE ANGLE, COMPACT BODY

Panasonic has announced the first camera to have both a 16:9 CCD and a wide-angle lens in a compact body. The DMC-LX1 uses a 4x (28-112mm) Leica DC lens which uses the same highly effective image stabilisation mechanism found on other high-end consumer cameras from Panasonic. Using the full sensor area, the LX2 records 8.6 megapixels in 16:9 aspect ratio, although you can use just the centre portion to record at either 3:2 or 4:3 ratio. No price was confirmed as we went to press, but the camera should be in shops soon.



■ KODAK CUTS

Kodak has announced that it will cut a further 10,000 jobs in the wake of its reported losses of \$146m (around £82.5m) in the second quarter of 2005. These are on top of the 15,000 job losses over three years that it announced last year as part of a restructuring plan to deal with the company's move from film to digital. Kodak has blamed the latest job cuts on a faster than expected downturn in sales of its film-based products. Most of the cuts will be made in Kodak's manufacturing concerns.

REVIEW DIGITAL CAMERA

SONY CyberShot T7

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £280 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.com

DETAILS www.sony.com



Sony's wafer-thin CyberShot T7 is encased in a metal jacket so, despite its fragile appearance, it's actually pretty robust. Its modern design makes it a little uncomfortable to hold despite a moulded grip on the right edge, and it always feels a little precarious in your hands.

The minute, non-protruding 3x zoom lens is well protected behind a sliding cover that doubles as the camera's power switch. Behind the lens lies a 5-megapixel sensor, which records pictures at a maximum resolution of 2,592x1,944. The 2.5" LCD screen's slow refresh rate means it's not the best for framing shots. However, its high resolution is great for reviewing your photos.

Shooting controls are a little cramped on the back, but the menu system is easy to navigate and always makes sense. A slider switches through movie, still and playback modes, while the zoom is operated at geriatric speed using a tiny slider on the top edge. Considering the small size of the T7, it offers a wealth of shooting options, including auto bracketing for exposure and five-step manual focus.

The CyberShot T7 performs well outdoors. Photos are bright, sharp and correctly exposed with generally accurate colour balance. Its on-camera

processing will be a little rigorous for some people, but you can tune this down to some extent using the saturation, contrast and sharpness settings.

Once you're inside or in low light, the T7 is less impressive. It struggles to capture fine detail, and even with the flash at its brightest setting the sensor still operates at the highest ISO setting. This produces a high level of noise even in bright portions of your photographs.

Like the less expensive FujiFilm FinePix F10 (see Hotlist opposite), the CyberShot T7 looks great and takes rich, clear photos outdoors. However, once the light disappears you're better off using your own memory rather than the camera's.

David McKinnon

✓ Incredibly thin but feels solid; rich outdoor shooting

✗ Struggles in low light

SPECIFICATIONS 2,592x1,944 resolution, 3x zoom lens (38mm-114mm), 32MB Memory Stick. **Part code** DSC-T7S

HOTLIST DIGITAL CAMERA

CANON PowerShot S2 IS

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £339 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.cameras2u.com

DETAILS www.canon.com

Canon's PowerShot S2-IS might weigh just over half a kilo, but it's incredibly comfortable to use. Its bright 12x zoom lens is mechanically stabilised, which helps the 5-megapixel sensor produce sharp, blur-free pictures even when shooting at full zoom from your hand. It takes rich, warm stills, but also records movies at 640x480 and 30fps. A stunning macro mode lets you focus on objects right up to the lens face. If you want a camera that has a big zoom lens and plenty of shooting options, this is the one to buy.



SPECIFICATIONS 2,560x1,920 resolution, stabilised 12x zoom lens (36-432mm), 16MB SD card. **Part code** 9883A007AA



HOTLIST TRANSPARENCY SCANNER

EPSON Perfection 4180 Photo

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £150 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.cameras2u.com

DETAILS www.epson.co.uk

If you want to get the best from your photos and slides when transferring them to your PC, you have to aim for maximum scanning resolution.

The Perfection 4180 Photo scans at a maximum of 4,800x9,600dpi, so you can be sure you'll capture every last detail. It can scan up to six slides at once, so it shouldn't take too long to digitise your entire collection.



SPECIFICATIONS 4,800x9,600 optical resolution, 35mm, slide, 120-roll transparency adaptor, USB Hi-Speed interface. **Part code** B11B170024





REVIEW DIGITAL CAMERA

OLYMPUS
μ Digital 800

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £257 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.buyacamera.co.ukDETAILS www.olympus.co.uk

The tough, silver-bodied μ Digital 800 feels solid and, as with all Olympus's μ cameras, has rubber seals on all its openings to make sure water can't get in during a downpour. It's reasonably heavy for a compact camera, but it's also one of the most comfortable to hold. The rounded body and clever button placement enable you to get a firm one-handed grip without inadvertently taking a picture or switching modes.

The 3x zoom lens (38-114mm film equivalent) retracts fully into the camera body and is protected by a sliding cover. The zoom distance is just enough to help you frame your shot, but you'll still have to get closer to distant objects.

The bright, high-resolution 2.5" screen is perfect for reviewing and framing your photos, and divides the controls in two. On the right are the zoom rocker, mode dial and direction pad, and on the left the quick function buttons. As well as full auto, shutter and aperture priority modes, it has 19 scene modes. These change on-camera image processing to suit your subject as well as adjusting aperture and shutter speed. Some of these modes use the camera's highest ISO of 1,600. This is great for shooting in minimal light without resorting to the flash, but any photos



captured at this sensitivity are limited to a resolution of 2,048x1,563 rather than the 8-megapixel camera's maximum of 3,264x2,448.

This is enough raw information to print up to A4 at 300dpi. However, the μ's 21MB of internal memory can hold only five photos at its maximum resolution, so you should budget an extra £40 for an additional 512MB xD memory card.

The movie mode is less than spectacular, recording at a maximum of 15fps at up to 640x480. Cameras of this price often provide a 30fps mode, which makes for much smoother and more convincing clips. The 1,230mAh lithium battery is rated for 300 shots. This should be plenty for a full day of photography as long as you don't spend too much time reviewing your shots. A backup will cost about £25.

Olympus has realised that most people don't read the manual, so to help you in the field, the μ Digital 800 comes with an on-camera guide. It's structured around various shooting conditions

and explains how to change the camera settings to cope with them.

While digital cameras should be easy to use, they should also be capable of taking high-quality images. The μ 800 does not always manage this. Exposure and white balance are expertly judged, producing rich, balanced photos with good contrast and full-bodied colours. Unfortunately, all the photos we took were spoiled to some extent by noise. This wasn't limited to the dark areas of photos, so it's likely that the noise is the product of on-camera processing routines rather than a lack of CCD sensitivity. This slightly degrades the overall sharpness of the photo and muddies fine detail and texture. In small prints this has limited impact, but it means that enlargements look less detailed than the pixel count would suggest.

Olympus's μ Digital 800 is very easy to use and turns out well-balanced, rich photos for small prints. Once you start making enlargements, though, the results of aggressive on-camera processing become more noticeable and detract from the photograph. For this price, we still recommend the 6-megapixel FujiFilm FinePix F10 (see Hotlist, below).

David McKinnon

✓ Comfortable and easy to use; excellent screen; weatherproof

✗ Photos exhibit too much noise

SPECIFICATIONS 3,264x2,448 resolution, 3x zoom lens (38-114mm), 21MB internal memory (takes xD cards). **Part code** 154704

HOTLIST SCANNER

MUSTEK
Be@rpaw 4800TA Pro II

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £61 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.comDETAILS www.mustek.co.uk

It may have been around for a while, but this scanner still offers the entry-level buyer above-average transparency results. It's easy to operate, with a simplified control panel for those who find the TWAIN interface too much. Scan quality isn't perfect, it's not as fast as many other scanners and there are no Mac drivers, but it's a great value all-rounder.

SPECIFICATIONS 2,400x4,800 optical resolution, 35mm, slide transparency adaptor, USB Hi-Speed interface. **Part code** 98-155-00010



HOTLIST DIGITAL CAMERA

FUJIFILM
FinePix F10

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £226 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.comDETAILS www.fujifilm.com

FujiFilm's metal-bodied FinePix F10 has a highly sensitive 6-megapixel sensor behind its 3x zoom lens. This makes it excellent for low-light photography. Its battery can run and run, lasting up to 500 shots between charges, and it's the most responsive camera we've tested. It also produces the sharpest photos we've seen from a compact camera.

SPECIFICATIONS 2,848x2,136 resolution, 3x zoom lens (36-108mm), 16MB xD memory. **Part code** N076590A



HOTLIST DIGITAL CAMERA

CANON
PowerShot A510

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £119 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.7dayshop.comDETAILS www.canon.co.uk

Canon has crammed a lot of controls into the A510, but it's still easy to use. It's comfortable to hold and uses standard AA batteries. The 3.2-megapixel camera has a 4x optical zoom and produces clear and vivid photos in automatic mode. Slip it into manual mode, though, and you can set the aperture and shutter speed, which is unusual for such an inexpensive camera.

SPECIFICATIONS 2,048x1,536 resolution, 4x optical zoom, 16MB SD memory. **Part code** 9717A007AA





REVIEW DIGITAL CAMERA

CASIO
Exilim EX-Z750

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £250 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.cameras2u.comDETAILS www.casio.com

The Casio EX-Z750's brushed metal casing looks and feels expensive. Behind its 3x zoom lens a 7.2-megapixel sensor records photos at a top resolution of 3,072x2,304 pixels. On the back is a bright 2.5" screen. It refreshes quickly, so it's perfect for framing your photos, but it's not really detailed enough for reviewing your shots in all their glory.

The Z750 is just the right size and shape for you to grip firmly with one hand, with the shutter, zoom and mode dial well positioned. It also has one of the quickest startup times and is ready for action almost as soon as you press the power button. Sadly the clumsy menu system is confusing at first and the quick access button that opens the ISO, image size, white balance and auto-focus settings is placed awkwardly on the edge of the screen.

Casio has programmed the Z750 with 30 different scene settings. These adjust a range of settings automatically, including colour balance, saturation, contrast and sharpness as well as more conventional focus, aperture and shutter values.

In good light the Z750 produces rich, sharp photos with well-balanced, true colours and just the



right exposure level. If you find the on-camera processing a bit heavy handed, you can alter the contrast, saturation and sharpness settings manually. Results with the flash are not good, though. Even with the flash on full power it's hard to get reliable results, with most photos lacking detail and appearing underexposed.

There is much to recommend the Z750, but its poor indoor performance means we'd go for FujiFilm's slightly cheaper 6.3-megapixel FinePix F10 (see Hotlist on page 35), which can handle a much wider range of lighting conditions.

David McKinnon



Quick startup time; large choice of shooting modes



Poor-quality flash shots

SPECIFICATIONS 3,072x2,304 resolution, 3x zoom lens, 16MB SD card.
Part code EX-Z750DDA

REVIEW DIGITAL CAMERA

NIKON
Coolpix S2

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £244 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.cameras2u.comDETAILS www.nikon.co.uk

Nikon's compact Coolpix S2 has a chrome-plated front panel that slides down to reveal the non-protruding 3x zoom lens. A 5-megapixel sensor records photos at a maximum resolution of 2,592x1,944 – enough for prints up to 6x9" – and movies at 640x480 and 15fps. The aluminium body is solid and, thanks to rubber seals on the battery and memory card compartments, splashproof.

At the back is a 2.5" screen. This is bright and ideal for shot composition, but with a relatively low resolution it's not great for reviewing your photos. The two-step shutter release doesn't give much tactile feedback, so it's hard to operate the exposure if the auto-focus is engaged.

The S2 usually gauges exposure correctly, although some photos were a bit dark in our tests. This can be corrected by on-camera exposure compensation or, in some cases, using D-lighting, Nikon's auto-contrast and brightness function.

Colours are vibrant and rich, making photos interesting and punchy. Noise creeps in when light levels are low, but generally it's kept to an acceptable level. The S2 performs well when using its flash, and photos showed a decent level of detail and accurate colour.



The Coolpix S2 connects to your computer using a USB cradle. This is convenient if you use only one computer, but if you travel or use more than one PC, it can be restrictive. Fortunately, the battery can be charged both in the cradle and directly from the power supply.

Nikon's Coolpix S2 takes more consistent pictures across various lighting conditions than the similarly priced and specified FujiFilm FinePix Z1. Its photos aren't quite as good as the best of the competition, but if you want a compact, splashproof camera, the S2 is a reasonable, if unexceptional, option.

David McKinnon



Splashproof; good flash performance



Unresponsive shutter control

SPECIFICATIONS 2,592x1,944 resolution, 3x zoom lens (35-105mm), 12MB internal memory (takes SD memory cards). **Part code** VAA360BC

CHOOSING A...

FLATBED
SCANNER

If you're thinking of buying a flatbed scanner but wonder what features you need, look no further than our expert guide

1

A basic flatbed scanner (see specs in grey below) can produce surprisingly good scans if the mechanics and optics are up to scratch – something you can't tell without performing a test scan. The colour depth is often quoted but this gives you no idea how faithful those colours will be, and poor focus can make a high optical resolution irrelevant. Disregard interpolated resolutions: they just blow up the scanned picture without adding any extra detail.

2

If you have a high workload, it's worth paying more for a faster scanner. The best can produce an A4 300dpi scan in 15 seconds and a preview scan – used to select a detail to scan – in around five seconds. If you have to scan a stack of paper, buy a scanner with an automatic document feeder (ADF).

3

A 300dpi scan is sharp to the human eye, but if you print it at twice the original size the final resolution is a grainy 150dpi. If you plan to print extreme enlargements you need a 1,200x2,400dpi, 2,400x2,400dpi or 2,400x4,800dpi flatbed. The mechanism and optics quality should also be increased accordingly.

4

Transparencies, such as slides and negatives, must be backlit to be scanned – look for a transparency adaptor. A 35mm film needs to be scanned at very high resolution to produce a decent-sized image. It is better to use a dedicated film scanner for such small items as they can cope with dust and scratches automatically.

5

Beyond the standard TWAIN driver that provides compatibility with any scanner-aware software, decent image-editing and OCR software is useful.

FILL IN YOUR SPECS HERE
(Recommended minimum in grey)

SCANNING AREA: A4

OPTICAL RESOLUTION: 600x1,200dpi

INTERFACE: USB Hi-Speed

SOFTWARE: TWAIN driver